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Company: Perchlorate not from site

A disputed report says the old PEPCON site is not the source of a contaminant found in Las Vegas Wash.

By Keith Rogers
Review-Journal

Reports released Monday by the Environmental Protection Division have set the stage for a showdown between two companies about their obligation to clean up a chemical found in Southern Nevada's drinking water supply.

Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. and American Pacific Corp. compiled the reports, which will help state environmental officials narrow an inquiry into where perchlorate is entering the Las Vegas Wash. The wash is a tributary that empties into Lake Mead six miles upstream of Southern Nevada's drinking supply intakes.

Brenda Pohlmann, supervisor of the state's Environmental Protection Division's Remediation Branch, said a preliminary review showed Kerr-McGee will work through mid-June to complete a field sampling plan that must be approved by the division.

The other report, by a consultant for American Pacific Corp., parent company of the old Pacific Engineering & Production Co. of Nevada plant, concluded the bulk of the perchlorate contamination is entering the wash downstream of the Kerr-McGee plant near Henderson, not from the former PEPCON site.

"They don't think their contamination plume gets down to the wash," Pohlmann said.

She said she has met with Kerr-McGee officials but not with American Pacific officials.

Kerr-McGee's environmental specialist, Susan Crowley, who is a member of the Clark County Board of Health, said she doubts American Pacific's investigation into the PEPCON site was thorough enough to warrant excluding the company for paying for part of the cleanup, a task state environmental officials have said will be expensive.

"To satisfy us that they're not going to be a player, they're going to have to do some more thorough geology," Crowley said.

John Gibson, American Pacific Corp.'s president and chief executive officer, said through a spokeswoman, "We are complying fully with the request of all local, state and federal agencies, and will continue to do so."

One of 47 wells sampled last year near the Kerr-McGee plant turned up perchlorate at levels of 3.7 million parts per billion. Perchlorate levels in one of four wells sampled last

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